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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001533

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY/IRAQ: CELIKKOL-KHALILZAD CONVERSATION

REF: A. ANKARA 1020

[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 0916

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. During a brief March 20 meeting in Ankara, Turkish Iraq envoy Celikkol told Ambassadors Khalilzad and Wilson that Turkey was ready to agree to a request from Muqtada al-Sadr to accept thirty Iraqi civilians wounded in recent Sadr City bombings for medical treatment. Khalilzad urged caution. Celikkol conveyed Turkey's willingness to be helpful with any upcoming international meetings on Iraq, described concerns about Kirkuk, and reiterated Turkish willingness to participate in an Iraq PRT. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Turkey's Iraq envoy Oguz Celikkol and Ambassadors Khalilzad and Wilson discussed Iraq during Khalilzad's March 20 re-fueling stop in Ankara. Celikkol told Khalilzad that Turkey had been asked by Muqtada al-Sadr to accept for medical treatment up to thirty Shi'a civilians wounded in recent Sadr City bombings. Turkey is inclined to agree to Sadr's request, Celikkol said, noting that Turkey had treated injured Iraqi Kurds and Sunnis in the past and wished to be even-handed. The Turks would seek to screen the injured persons to insure that no militia members or other combatants would be admitted.

[1](#)3. (C) Ambassador Khalilzad welcomed Turkey's willingness to help but noted that Sadr's militia continued to be implicated in Iraq violence. He suggested Turkey might handle the request to treat the Sadr City victims through the Iraqi Red Crescent. Celikkol responded that the GOT had dealt directly with requests for treatment in the past -- not through the Turkish or Iraqi Red Crescent societies -- and is reluctant to change practice at this time. Ambassador Wilson encouraged Celikkol to keep Turkey's help low key and not allow Sadr to use it for propaganda purposes, including if Sadr were to come here. Celikkol said this would not happen. Khalilzad cautioned that the USG remains deeply concerned about Sadr's role in Iraq and discouraged any Sadr visit here.

[1](#)4. (C) Celikkol said he hoped government formation talks would result in competent ministers of defense and security, noting that the incumbent Security Minister had refused a Turkish offer of specialized security training. Khalilzad briefed Celikkol on progress made with the parties in Iraq on governing principles and procedures, noting the next challenge would be to find acceptable candidates for key cabinet positions.

¶5. (C) Celikkol raised the idea of a neighbors of Iraq plus Perm-5 meeting at the foreign minister level, which FM Gul and UNSYG Annan had discussed in New York on February 26 (ref a). Ambassador noted that Washington had not responded favorably. Khalilzad suggested the earlier purpose of the meeting, to calm tensions in the wake of the Samarra bombing, had been somewhat overtaken by events. Celikkol suggested such a neighbors meeting could still be useful to congratulate and give impetus to a new Iraqi government once it is formed. He added that Turkey had not heard back from the UNSYG's office in any case. Khalilzad outlined U.S. thinking on an International Compact for Iraq (ref b), inspired by the Afghanistan Compact agreed to in London. Celikkol reacted positively to the idea and offered Istanbul as a venue and help with logistics.

¶6. (C) Khalilzad asked if the GOT has had further discussions with Iraqi Kurds on the PKK. Celikkol responded that Turkey is waiting for the new government to be named. It also intends to talk to the Iraqi government about the status of Kirkuk. Celikkol added that President Talabani had already promised to talk to Massoud Barzani. Khalilzad noted that some Iraqi factions were trying to re-open constitutional issues now, before a new government is in place. The U.S. had made it clear this was a bad time to do so, including on the issue of Kirkuk, though we and many in Iraq share Turkey's concerns about how it is handled. All Iraqi groups needed time to work together and build mutual trust before they try to deal with difficult constitutional issues.

¶7. (C) Celikkol confirmed Turkey is still eager to participate in a PRT and is looking at Mosul. He reported that Ghazi al-Yawar has agreed to make property available for

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the Turkish General Consulate there. Khalilzad suggested the GOT also consider participating in a new PRT being formed in the Baghdad region.

¶8. (U) Amb Khalilzad cleared this message.

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WILSON